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ABSTRACT

A study examined pragmatic routine and indirection as regularly-used strategies for accomplishing linguistic action that, while conventional, can pose problems for non-native speakers. Two kinds of conventionalities are distinguished: conventionality of means (kinds of semantic structure that have acquired a standard illocutionary force, such as, in English, an ability question functioning as a request), and conventions of form (standardized linguistic formulations associated with a particular illocution). The two types of conventions are each envisioned as a continuum representing degrees of conventionality. Literature relating to each is reviewed. It is argued that on these continua, indirectness is context-sensitive and routine serves to promote fluency. It is concluded that closer attention must be paid to the social context of second language learning and to the learning opportunities provided by different environments of second language acquisition. Contains 57 references. (Author/MSE)

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ROUTINE AND INDIRECTION IN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS

Gabriele Kasper

In this paper, two types of conventionality will be distinguished. Different kinds of indirection and pragmatic routines will be described in terms of degrees of conventionality. Select examples from the literature and a few choice anecdotes will demonstrate how L2 learners handle these aspects of their pragmatic competence. Based on two pertinent studies, it will be argued that learners' social environment and learning context need closer attention if we wish to gain better understanding of the acquisition of routines and indirectness by nonnative speakers.

INTRODUCTION

Pragmaticists such as van Dijk (1985) and Thomas (in press) assert that utterances are inherently indeterminate. Other scholars, among them Coulmas (1981) and Pawley and Syder (1983), emphasize the role of prepackaged, formulaic routines in adult native speakers' communicative competence. Coulmas (1981) notes in the introduction to his book on conversational routine that "a great deal of communicative activity consists of enacting routines making use of prefabricated linguistic units in a well-known and generally accepted manner" (p. 1). Both strategies - indirection and routine - are available in any speech community. As regularly employed means of accomplishing linguistic action, they are pragmalinguistic universals. Their universality notwithstanding, it is also well attested that both routine and indirection can involve comprehension and production problems for nonnative speakers.

In this paper, two types of conventionality will be distinguished. Different kinds of indirection and pragmatic routines will be described in terms of degrees of conventionality. Select examples from the literature and a few choice anecdotes will demonstrate how L2 learners handle these aspects of their pragmatic competence. Based on two pertinent studies, it will be argued that learners' social environment and learning context need closer attention if we wish to gain better understanding of the acquisition of routines and indirectness by nonnative speakers.

TWO TYPES OF CONVENTIONALITY

In order to get a conceptual handle on routine and indirection as strategies of linguistic action, I shall follow Clark's (1979) distinction of two types of convention of usage (Searle, 1975). *Conventions of means* refer to the kinds of semantic structure which have acquired a standardized illocutionary force, for instance, in English, an ability question functioning as a request. In the speech act realization literature, conventions of means are the semantic formulae (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983) by which different speech acts can be performed. *Conventions of form* comprise the standardized linguistic formulations associated with a particular illocution. Conventions of form are always associated with one or more

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conventions of means, whereas the reverse is not true. For instance, *I'm sorry* is routinely associated with a meaning convention such as 'expressing regret', but regret can be expressed in other ways than by saying you're sorry.

The two types of conventions can be envisioned as each constituting a continuum, representing different degrees of conventionality. One end of each continuum represents entirely fixed, invariable semantic formulae and expressions. The opposite end comprises utterances whose semantic structure and forms of expression are not conventionalized for any particular pragmatic usage. Each continuum will be discussed in turn.

Conventions of Means

At its high end, the **conventions of means continuum** includes semantic formulae which are strongly associated with a particular illocutionary force. Their use may range anywhere from strongly expected to contextually prescribed in the speech community. For instance, thanking somebody for goods, services or a kindness requires an explicit expression of gratitude in Japanese (Ikoma, 1993; Miyake, 1993) and is by far the most preferred semantic formula in American English (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986). In Japanese, another frequent semantic formula used with the illocution of thanking is the expression of apology. However, the use of this meaning convention is more context-dependent than expressing gratitude, in that offering apology is called for when the giver is status-higher and the received good or service seen as involving an appreciable debt to the giver (Ikoma, 1993). Thus, offering apology appears to be less conventionalized as a **general** semantic strategy of thanking than expressing gratitude, although under specific contextual conditions, apologizing will be highly conventionalized for the illocution of thanking. The interaction of conventionality of pragmalinguistic usage (as illustrated by different thanking routines) and conventionality of **context** (the extent to which a context is scripted) has consequences for the assignment of illocutionary force in online processing, as shown by Gibbs (1983) for native speakers of English and Takahashi and Roitblat (1994) for Japanese-English interlanguage users.

In the case of thanking and apologizing, the most highly conventionalized semantic formulae are derived from the sincerity condition. Blum-Kulka's (1989) cross-linguistic comparison of conventionally indirect requests suggests that in the four languages examined (Australian English, Canadian French, Argentinian Spanish, Hebrew), the highest degree of conventionalization resides in ability queries, that is, in semantic formulae linked to the first preparatory condition of requesting. Topicalization of other felicity conditions, such as the second preparatory condition and the sincerity condition, varies much more intra-culturally and cross-linguistically. For example, in the corpus of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), querying H's willingness accounted for 27% of the Australian English requests, but only for 6% of the conventionally indirect strategies in Argentinian Spanish. Yet in other speech acts, conventionality of semantic formulae seems hardly related to felicity conditions at all. For instance, a common refusal strategy in American English, Japanese (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990), and Chinese (Chen, Ye, & Zhang, 1995) is giving a reason or an excuse for non-compliance, often prefaced by an expression of regret. These highly conventionalized refusal strategies have no direct relationship to the felicity conditions of refusals (although by giving a reason for refusing,

S invites H to infer the propositional content rule underlying S's refusal, i.e., that S is not going to engage in the course of action proposed by H). The relationship between semantic formulae and felicity conditions thus seems to affect the degree of conventionality in some speech acts but much less in others. The conventionality of semantic devices such as giving reasons and expressing regret in refusing can be more readily explained as instances of routinized conversational implicature. An expression of regret is routinely heard as a refusal if it occurs as a response to a *conditionally relevant* initiating act by H, such as a request, suggestion, offer, or invitation.

Cross-culturally different conventions of means have frequently been cited as a source of pragmatic failure. In their studies of expressions of gratitude by nonnative speakers, Eisenstein and Bodman (1986, 1993) found negative pragmatic transfer of apologies and well-wishes to the giver. For example, upon being offered a loan from a friend, a Japanese learner said ***I'm sorry. I'll always remember the debt of gratitude***. A student from the Middle East responded *may God increase your bounty*, thereby providing the title of Bodman and Eisenstein's 1988 paper. Two further examples of attested pragmatic failure due to unfamiliar conventions of means are the ritual invitation in American culture and the ritual refusal in Chinese. According to an anecdotal report by Wolfson (1983), these culture-bound rituals can be quite risky. Ritual invitations and refusals can lead to misunderstanding if the receiver does not pick up the particular meaning and form conventions which signal quite clearly whether the invitation or the refusal is ritual or substantive. For the American invitation to be ritual, it needs to be vague, as in *we must do lunch* ***sometime***. By contrast, *Let's have lunch tomorrow 12:30 at the Hau Tree Lanai* cannot be ritual. The Chinese refusal of an offer or invitation is ritual when the reason offered for refusing relates to the inviter's costs, rather than to the invitee's, as shown by Gu (1990), Mao (1994), and Chen, Ye, & Zhang (1995). So, *you're too busy, it's too much work for you* index that the invitee is only being polite but has no intention to insist on her refusal. A substantive refusal refers to refuser's costs, such as prior alternative engagements.

From the speech act realization literature, it appears that speech communities differ not so much in the absolute availability of a semantic formula as part of a speech act set. Rather, most cross-cultural variation relates to the degree of conventionality of a particular meaning convention. A few examples of such **relative** differences in conventionalization are

- rejecting (rather than accepting or qualifying) compliments (Wolfson, 1989)
- complimenting as a request strategy (Holmes & Brown, 1987)
- complaining through an intermediary (Steinberg Du, 1995)
- giving positive remarks in corrections to a status-lower person (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993)
- offering a statement of philosophy in refusals (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990)
- explicitly apologizing, explaining and offering repair in apologies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Horie Ingkaphirom, 1993; Bergman & Kasper, 1993)
- selecting different directness levels in requesting (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1987).

Some of the difficulty in assigning illocutionary force and politeness values to differentially conventionalized semantic formulae clearly derives from differences in cultural contextualization. For instance, rejecting compliments and praise (not only of oneself but also of members of one's ingroup, such as spouses and children) may be culturally required because acceptance would be seen as lack of modesty. Apologizing as a thanking routine is meaningful when obtaining goods or services of a certain order and from certain people creates social obligations and imbalance. Conventions of means are motivated by social order, and they do not necessarily go away when the social order changes, even though they may become less frequent. Thus Held (1987) showed how quite excessive expressions of indebtedness as thanking routines abounded in 17th century France, and they are still used in contemporary French, but usually tongue in cheek (e.g., *je vous baise les mains, je suis votre serviteur* (Held, 1987, p. 216).

Conventionalized implicature such as the semantic formulae in speech act realization needs to be distinguished from novel, situation-dependent implicatures, which constitute the non-conventionalized end of the conventions of means continuum. Bouton (1988) demonstrated cross-cultural variation in learners' interpretation of nonconventional implicature, and some effect of type of implicature on learners' comprehension. He also showed that in an ESL context, exposure functions as the great equalizer - after 4 1/2 years of residence, learners were very successful in understanding most nonconventional implicatures, irrespective of their cultural background (1992).

Bouton distinguished different types of implicature depending on the Gricean maxim that is violated. A speech act-based approach to account for linguistic action at the low-conventionality end of the scale has been proposed by Weizman. In a series of studies, Weizman (1985, 1989, 1993) demonstrated that *requestive hints* display degrees of opacity at the illocutionary and propositional level. On independent scales ranging from relative transparency to extreme opacity, illocutionary opacity is minimal when H's commitment is queried (*are you going to give us a hand* as a request for help), stronger in the case of feasibility questions (*did you come by car* as a request for a ride) and most opaque when a potential reason for requesting is stated (*I haven't got the time to clean up* as an attempt to get H to clean the kitchen). Weizman (1989) argues that the question strategies are less opaque than the reason statements because of the stronger conditional relevance of questions on their second pair parts: either H provides a reply (*yes/no*) or 'takes the hint' and makes an offer. Statements of potential reason, on the other hand, are not particularly eliciting, except perhaps for a backchanneling signal. On the propositional scale, requestive intent is most transparent when some reference is made to the desired act (*I haven't got the time to clean up the kitchen*), less transparent when H's involvement in the act or some precondition for it is focused (*you've left the kitchen in a mess*), and most opaque when some relevant component relating to the act is mentioned, whereas the desired action itself and H's part in it remain implicit (*the kitchen is in a mess*). The illocutionary and propositional scales are thought to interact in various ways, so that a given utterance may be extremely opaque on one scale and quite transparent on the other (Weizman, 1989).

Weizman's analysis accounts for nonconventionally indirect requests. It remains to be seen whether it can be extended to a more general framework for the analysis of nonconventional indirectness. Studies of other speech acts suggest that what might be quite

a transparent hinting strategy in the context of requesting may well prove rather inscrutable when the illocutionary intent is different.

A case in point, much discussed in the literature, is the use of *questions as a strategy of indirection* (Goody, 1978). A particularly well-publicized example is the enigmatic title of Beebe and Takahashi's 1989 paper "*Do you have a bag*". In a sushi bar in New York, a Japanese waiter warned an American female customer by these same words that she was in the process of having her purse stolen. Being attuned to Japanese pragmatics, Beebe disambiguated the waiter's comment as the warning that it was meant to be. The implied illocutionary force, while obscure to the American customer, would presumably have been perfectly transparent to a Japanese guest.

Questions are productive conventions of means for the expression of a large variety of indirect illocutions. Perhaps it is because of their universality that they are fertile ground for cross-cultural misunderstanding., Beebe and Takahashi (1989) and Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991) report on questioning strategies used in unequal power encounters by the lower status participant. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) reported about series of questions, used by Japanese students to gently convey to their professor that she had made a mistake. The American professor, unfamiliar with this status-preserving convention of criticizing a superior, felt rather more face-threatened by this other-imposed 'self-discovery' than she would have if the mistake had been clearly pointed out to her. In the Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford study, some students responded to their advisor's suggestions by asking questions about the suggested course, such as in the following exchange:

(1) Advisor: You will need to take, uh, after you take L503
Student: ah, excuse me, what was the name? (p. 47).

Questions of this type would sometimes occur in series, serving to avoid an overt rejection of the advisor's suggestion and thus preserving the appearance of status congruence. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford showed that the use of questions as pseudo-status congruent strategies was not limited to the Japanese students, nor to the nonnative speakers as a group. However, only the NNS used information and repetition requests as avoidance strategies when they intended to reject their advisor's suggestion.

Perhaps related to Beebe's and Takahashi's "*Bag*" example is the convention in communities such as Japan, Indonesia and China to interpret requests for information as requests for action, especially when the questioner is the status-higher person (e.g., Sakamoto & Naotsuka, 1982). Surely requesting information can and does acquire the force of requests for action in Anglo communication. But quite often, ambiguity remains unresolved because the implied illocutionary force is weakly conventionalized. A well-known example is quoted by Gumperz (1982) in his Discourse Strategies, illustrating pragmatic failure in the conversation between a British-American couple:

(2) Husband: Do you know where today's paper is?
Wife: *I'll* get it for you.
Husband: That's O.K. *I'll* get it.
Wife: No, **I'll** get it. (p. 135, emphases as in original)

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As illustrated, the availability of particular meaning conventions in a speech community, or even across speech communities, does not make their use fool-proof, especially when they are weakly conventionalized and not associated with specific form conventions. The indeterminacy of such questions may be constrained by contextualization conventions, mutual knowledge, history of the interaction and the like, but they essentially remain negotiable and fraught with potential misunderstanding.

And yet, even if S's intention and H's uptake do not match, as in the Gumperz example, the husband is unlikely to be as flabbergasted by his wife's helpful response as Beebe's American ladies in the shushi bar were. 'Not getting the hint', or taking one where none was intended, because of failure to attend to relevant cues or activating pertinent background knowledge is one thing, comparable perhaps to lower-level slips of the ear, which are evidence of temporarily relaxed **control** rather than defective knowledge. Unfamiliarity with a convention of means is quite a different matter. Surely it is often possible for a listener to decipher novel implicatures, but when they are mapped on semantic and pragmatic patterns for which there are no pre-existing conventions in the listener's pragmatic knowledge, she might be hard pressed to inference successfully. Familiarity with conventions of means is grounded in the wider context of cultural conventions and ways of speaking. Conventionality in a target community means nothing to a novice to that community, but since meaning conventions, perhaps even more than conventions of form, are taken for granted by members, they will be unsuspecting of the communication problems which unfamiliar conventions may present to the newcomer.

My single most memorable encounter with a peculiar convention of means in English is the so-called Pope Question. The Pope Q is a rhetorical question whose propositional content is unrelated to the preceding discourse and hence violates the Maxim of Relevance. Because it queries the obvious, it also violates the Quantity Maxim. Its prototypes are *Is the Pope Catholic?*, glossed as 'of course' and *Is the Pope Jewish?*, glossed as 'of course not'. My first encounter with the Pope Q happened when I was taking a walk through Sydney at the AILA Congress in 1987, together with a male colleague. We were chatting about nothing in particular, when suddenly in response to some question that I can't remember he says *Is the Pope Catholic?* I still recall my feeling of utter amazement, the mild shock that a sudden experience of cognitive dissonnance sometimes creates. At first it seemed impossible to attach any meaning to this apparently off the wall comment. In fact I briefly considered whether there was something wrong with my companion. But then the implicature machine started rolling, I figured out that his implied meaning was 'of course, stupid', and just about managed to produce some unmarked form of uptake. All of this took place in milliseconds. There might have been a slight increase in response latency on my part, but not enough to disrupt the conversation. The pragmatic failure took place nowhere else but in my head, i.e., for those favoring conversation analysis over a speech act approach to pragmatics, it did not take place at all. At this first encounter with the Pope Q, it ranged far down at the low end of my personal conventions of means continuum. I perceived this expression as a highly idiosyncratic conversational implicature, a brain child of my companion's creative pragmalinguistic ability and predeliction for bad jokes. This incident happened at a time when I had been a learner of English as a foreign language for 27 years. My surprise and relief was therefore great when in the following year, I read Bouton's (1988) study of nonnative speakers' ability to interpret implicatures in English. Even given the benefit of an

ESL context rather than my continental European EFL environment, foreign students at the University of Illinois had the same trouble with the Pope Q as I did. Recently, Nishihara (1993) commented that the more inscrutable ways of conversational indirection are by no means "a patented monopoly" of Japanese pragmatics, but that Anglos have their own claim to fame when it comes to enigmatic ways of speaking. To my deep gratification, she cites as a case in point - the Pope Q (p. 27).

It has been argued that in cross-cultural communication, problems in assigning meaning to indirection of various sorts arises from a lack of shared pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. Such lack of common ground both makes it more difficult to coordinate action in the first place, and lessens the chances of successful repair once pragmatic failure has occurred (Janney & Arndt, 1992). However, as documented in the comprehensive literature on miscommunication between members of the same speech community (e.g., Coupland, Giles, & Wiemann, 1991), indirection is a hazardous business in native speaker interaction too. Why, then, asks Weizman (1989), bother with indirection at all?

Pragmatic folk wisdom has it that more indirect is more polite, a belief also promoted in the past by such eminent pragmaticists as Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987). And indeed, in the Japanese context, the negative politeness strategies reported by Beebe and Takahashi (1989) appear to preserve a higher-status interlocutor's positive face by providing her the opportunity for 'self-discovery'. However, studies by Walters (1979), House (1986), and Blum-Kulka (1987) demonstrate that greater opacity, as in nonconventionally indirect requests compared to their conventionally indirect counterparts, is perceived as less polite by NS of such languages as Puerto Rican Spanish (Walters, 1979), American English (Walters, 1979; Blum-Kulka, 1987), Hebrew (Blum-Kulka, 1987), British English, and German (House, 1986). Low conventionality of indirection thus does not seem to be motivated by politeness in these languages and is obviously inapt to transmit propositional and illocutionary information in a straightforward way. If nonconventional indirectness does little if anything for politeness and nothing for efficient information transmission, the nagging question remains what it is good for anyway. Weizman (1985, 1989, 1993) offers a convincing answer, at least as far as nonconventional indirectness in requests goes. What makes requestive hints an advantageous strategy at times is their potential for speakers "to have their cake and eat it", that is, to "cause an action to happen and at the same time avoid assuming responsibility for it" (1989, p. 71f.). Weizman calls this fundamental interactive property of nonconventional indirectness its *deniability potential*. Because it is the very essence of pragmatic indeterminacy that allows people to reject the interpretation assigned by H to their utterances, nonconventional indirectness is a prime candidate for metapragmatic comments of the type *that's not what I meant*. Furthermore, the inherent deniability potential of nonconventional indirectness explains why it is rarely used as a request strategy, compared to more direct request patterns, especially conventional indirectness. In the CCSARP data, native speakers of Australian and American English, German, Canadian French, Hebrew, and Argentinian Spanish (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Weizman, 1993) used requestive hints as rarely as in 5.6% of their entire request strategies. Native speakers of British English and Danish resorted to hinting even less frequently (4.5%, House & Kasper, 1987). In the same contexts, learners of Hebrew hinted in 8.4%, learners of English in 4.5% (Weizman, 1993), Danish learners of German and English in 2.9%, and German

learners of English in 3.5% of their total request strategies (House & Kasper, 1987). While it is quite possible that the data collection method (Discourse Completion Questionnaires) contributed to subjects' going more on record with their requests than they might do in authentic interaction, requestive hints were also very low frequency choices in open-ended roleplays (Kasper, 1981) and in different authentic encounters (Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gerson, 1985). There is obvious contextual variation, as reported in all of the pertinent studies. However the overall lack of appeal of nonconventional indirectness as a request strategy is directly related to its deniability potential. While apparently not deemed very effective for requestive purposes by the examined 'Western' populations, nonconventional indirectness is a good thing for speakers to have handy when they don't wish to commit themselves to a particular course of action or seek to avoid accountability. And the need for ambiguity, which provides the desired loophole when opting out is more important than clarity **and** politeness, is satisfied by nonconventional indirectness in the case of other face-threatening acts such as complaining (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987, 1993), disagreeing and criticizing (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989), correcting (Takahashi & Beebe, 1993), refusing (Beebe et al., 1990) and rejecting (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991). The deniability hypothesis also throws a somewhat different light on the questioning strategy in unequal power encounters, discussed above. Whether the question strategy is an effective means to save the higher status interlocutor's face seems doubtful to some of the American professors who have been exposed to it, but it obviously appears to be an adequate device to save H's face in the communities where the strategy is more highly conventionalized. What is at least equally important though is the protection the question strategy offers to the lower-status speaker - and by 'protection' I don't mean face protection but protection from retaliation in case the higher status participant takes offense. S's face wants may be involved as well, but more in the sense of avoiding to appear disrespectful, or 'out of status', in Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's terms (1990, 1991). In order to capture this kind of reflective face want, a face concept centering around a person's social self, such as the one proposed for Chinese culture by Mao (1994), seems better suited than Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of positive face.

As for the processing of indirectness by NNS, Bouton (1988) found that type of implicature and learners' cultural background can account for differences in NNS's comprehension of implicature. While his study examined learners' comprehension of indirectness off-line, Takahashi and Roitblat (1994) probed into learners' on-line processing of conventional indirectness. They found (a) support for a multiple meaning model of pragmatic comprehension, and (b) no differences in illocutionary force assignment between NS and advanced Japanese learners of English. Since the learner populations in Bouton's and Takahashi and Roitblat's studies were proficient NNS, it remains a matter of future investigation whether less proficient learners do worse, and what developmental paths they follow in developing the ability to understand indirection at different levels of conventionality.

Conventions of Form

We will now consider the continuum representing different **conventions of form**. The low end of the continuum is occupied by the creatively produced utterances which have been the favorite child of linguistic theory. Requestive hints, nonconventionalized maxim

violations and a whole range of semantic formulae associated with specific speech acts do not combine with any conventions of form that regularly signal their illocutionary force. Processing has to rely on context, background knowledge, and utterance meaning. It is therefore the more conventionalized pole of the conventions of form continuum that we will focus upon.

In the literature, prepatterned speech has been discussed under such labels as routines, formulaes, formulaic speech, prefabricated patterns, unanalyzed chunks, gambits, lexical phrases, and perhaps a few others (e.g., Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). Coulmas (1979, 1981) refers to the conventionalized forms which have particular pragmatic functions associated with them as *routine formulae*, described as '"highly conventionalized prepatterned expressions whose occurrence is tied to more or less standardized communication situation" (1981, p. 3). Routine formulae thus form a subset of a broader class of prepackaged linguistic devices, termed *lexical phrases* by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992). In Nattinger and DeCarrico's theory, lexical phrases are defined as

> multi-word lexical phenomena that exist somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax, conventionalized form/function composites that occur more frequently and have more idiomatically determined meaning than language that is put together each time (1992, p. 1).

Lexical phrases are part of speakers' *pragmalinguistic* knowledge because they have specific illocutionary, discourse organizational and politeness functions associated with them. They are also part of speaker's *sociopragmatic* knowledge in that their use is governed by contextual factors of the speech situation. Because my focus is on the pragmatic properties rather than on the lexical features of routines, I prefer the term 'pragmatic routines' or 'routine formulae' to 'lexical phrases'.

In order to describe the formal properties of pragmatic routines such as *hold your horses*, *thanks an awful lot*, or *could you do x?*, Nattinger and DeCarrico propose four structural criteria (p. 38ff): (1) length and grammatical status of the phrase, (2) whether its form is canonical or non-canonical, (3) whether the pattern is variable or fixed, and (4) whether the phrase is continuous or discontinuous (1992, p. 38). Each of these criteria presents a continuum rather than suggesting categorical applicability. For instance, of the three pragmatic routines just cited, *hold your horses* is the most fixed, *thanks an awful lot* is more variable, and *could you do x* is the most variable of the three. The four criteria lend themselves to describe four structural categories of pragmatic routines: polywords, institutional expressions, phrasal constraints, and sentence builders. *Polywords* are lexical items, such as *hold your horses* (as an expression of disagreement) or *at any rate* (as a discourse marker and fluency device). They come in canonical varieties, i.e., forms derivable from grammatical rules, as in *hold your horses* or *at any rate*. They also come in non-canonical varieties, in which case they present their own idiosyncratic minigrammar (Pawley & Syder, 1983), as in *as it were* as an exemplifier or *so far so good* as an expression of approval. Polywords allow no variability - for instance, the topic shifter *by the way* cannot be modified to *along the way* or *by the road*. They are continuous in that they do not allow for insertion of other lexical material. *Institutionalized expressions* such as greeting and parting formulae (*how are you*, *nice meeting you*) are invariable sentence-length

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phrases, mostly canonical and continuous. Formulae such as *there you go* as expression of approval, *get a life* (disapproval), or *give me a break* (objection) illustrate the more frequent canonical subset. Some noncanonical ones are *long time no see* or *be that as it may*. *Phrasal constraints* are mostly shorter lexical frames to be completed by way of paradigmatic substitution, such as the canonical expressions *as far as I* ***can tell/know*** (qualifier) or the greeting *good* ***morning/afternoon/evening***, or non-canonical phrases such as the exemplifiers or *for* ***instance/example***. They are mostly but not always continuous (*the* ***sooner/earlier*** *the* ***better***).

Finally, *sentence builders*, or *lexicalized sentence stems* in Pawley and Syder's terminology (1983), supply frameworks for entire sentences, such as *modal + you + VP (for me)* as a conventionally indirect request pattern. Sentence builders are highly variable in the phrasal and clausal elements they permit, and they come both in canonical and non-canonical, continuous and discontinuous variants. An example for non-canonical and discontinuous is the comparator of the format *the* ***comparative*** *X, the* ***comparative*** Y, as *in the faster I speak, the sooner this talk will be over*, or *the longer we stay on the beach, the more sunburnt we will get*. It is an important feature of sentence builders that they combine "paradigmatic flexibility" with "syntagmatic simplicity" (p. 17f, 49ff). By and large, the four structural categories of lexical phrases can be arranged on continua of permitted variability and discontinuity, where polywords represent the low end, sentence builders the high end of each continuum, with institutionalized expressions and phrasal constraints coming in between (p. 45).

Nattinger and DeCarrico's analysis lends itself well to partially solve a puzzle in speech act theory, i.e., the issue of conventionalization of linguistic forms for certain pragmatic functions (Searle, 1975; Blum-Kulka, 1989). Why do some syntactic forms of requesting, for instance, become more conventionalized than others? Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) suggest that it is precisely the combination of syntagmatic simplicity with paradigmatic flexibility that favors conventionalization of such syntactic pattern as *modal + you + VP (can/could you park the car)*, and variants of the same, such as *modal + you (mind/kindly/be willing to) + VP (would you mind turning the TV down; would you kindly stop using the blender while I'm on the phone; would you be willing to accept my chapter three months after the deadline)*. By means of a slot-and-filler technique operating on a few basic syntagmas, conventionally indirect requests with a large variation in surface elements can be generated, preserving the illocutionary force of requesting but expressing different politeness values. Syntagmatic simplicity and paradigmatic flexibility are also the structural features of other highly conventionalized sentence builders. For instance, compliments are routinely realized in different varieties of English by a very small set of sentence builders, such as *I + like/love + your + NP (I like your new hair cut)* and *your + NP + be/look + adj*, where the adjective is usually part of a short list of positively evaluating items (*nice, good, great*, as in *your hair looks great*)(Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes, 1988).

The structural properties of pragmatic routines are associated with their sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic **functions**. Under a **sociolinguistic** perspective, pragmatic routines serve to reach recurrent communicative goals in standardized social contexts. Coulmas (1979) identifies two major sociolinguisic purposes of pragmatic routines: Maintaining orderliness

of communication, and supporting group identity. Pragmatic routines help **maintaining orderliness** of communication by

> (1) regulating emotional situations; (2) reducing the complexity of social interaction; (3) facilitating decision processes in the selection of communicative means; (4) organizing reactions to social situations; and (5) furnishing the verbal means for communicating "the right idea in the right place".

Pragmatic routines serve to express **group identity**

> (1) by serving as instruments for establishing rapport [...]; (2) by reinforcing the self-awareness of the members of a group as group members; (3) by perpetuating goals, values, norms, and customs of a group, and in yielding the desired effect if properly employed; (4) by indicating the speaker's familiarity with and readiness to conform to the norms of the group; and (5) by being a means of defining social relations and relative social status of communicators (1979, p. 254).

To these macro-sociolinguistic purposes may be added their pragmatic and discourse-organizational functions at the micro-level of communicative interaction: as illocutionary force indicating devices, politeness markers to mitigate and aggravate illocutionary force, discourse-regulators to open, maintain, and close conversation, and to mark discourse boundaries, and as contextualization conventions.

Coulmas (1979) notes as one fundamental sociolinguistic function of pragmatic routines their potential to reduce the complexity of social interaction. At the **psycholinguistic** level, this sociolinguistic function is matched by a reduction of processing costs. In terms of storage, it has been proposed that prefabricated patterns are multiply encoded in the mental lexicon, as unanalyzed chunks **and** in terms of their individual lexical components (e.g., Zernick & Dyer, 1987). Retrieval is therefore faster because unlike in the case of novel utterances, routines can be imported whole-sale into the formulator (Levelt, 1989) during speech production, rather than having to be assembled from scratch. The "shared representations" proposed by Stemberger (1985) in his connectionist model of speech production would also be compatible with a multiple storage model for pragmatic routines. As with any kind of routinized behavior, the advantages are low attentional demands and a high success rate if the routine is properly executed. Formulae have also been analyzed as indicators of planning units in speech production. As demonstrated, for instance, by Dechert (1983), Raupach (1984), and Rehbein (1987a, b), formulaic chunks are regular features of longer utterances in learner speech, where they alternate with newly created utterance stretches. The freshly assembled utterance parts are typically marked by less fluent delivery, such as lower rate of articulation and increased pausing. In the alternation between fluently executed formulae and less fluent novel utterance stretches, the formulae serve as "islands of reliability" (Dechert 1983, quoting Lesser & Erman, 1977) which free planning capacity and allow the speaker to monitor her utterance pre- and post execution.

From a psycholinguistic viewpoint, then, pragmatic routines have a prime function in promoting fluency in speech production. But while any kind of proceduralized linguistic knowledge facilitates fluent speech, pragmatic formulae additionally support fluent production

because they are indexed for specific pragmatic and discourse functions. Hence, in terms of Levelt's (1989) model of speech production, it is conceivable that in constructing the preverbal message in initial utterance planning, conceptual units for which pragmatic routines exist are identified faster than those for which no prepackaged solutions are available, and can thus be sent to the formulator more speedily.

With the notable exception of a recent paper by Schmidt (1992), mainstream SL research has been less interested in the function of routines in fluency than in their role in second language development. Researchers such as Hakuta (1974) and Wong Fillmore (1976) have demonstrated the role of formulaic speech for the initial stages of L2 development, where routines help learners communicate with minimal resources and hence elicit further input. Furthermore, prepackaged interlanguage units can be gradually unpacked and thus serve as material for rule learning. In the interlanguage pragmatics literature, by contrast, pragmatic routines have predominantly been seen as a weak point in learners' pragmalinguistic competence. In a great number of studies (e.g., Wildner-Bassett, 1984), it has been shown that learners fail to use pragmatic routines when such formulae are called for, use contextually inappropriate routines, choose the right routine but modify it somehow so that it misfires, or misunderstand pragmatic routines in the input. Edmondson and House (1991) argue that the waffling effect, i.e., the tendency found in some studies that learners talk too much, may be directly related to a lack of readily available conversational routines. Edmondson and House suggest that learners compensate the absence of shorter, situationally specialized routines in their pragmatic knowledge by constructing rule-based, novel utterances, which require more linguistic material and processing effort to convey pragmatic intent.

Furthermore, two studies (Wildner-Bassett, 1984; Rehbein, 1987b) suggest a strong impact of social context and learning environment on learners' use and acquisition of pragmatic routines. The study by Wildner-Bassett (1984) examined the acquisition of pragmatic routines (*gambits*) by advanced German learners of English as a foreign language. The subjects were 36 men working for a major industrial company at middle and upper management level. These learners participated in either of two types of English courses, each giving them 40 hrs of instruction. The control group was taught according to the standard method used in the company's in-house language instruction, a vaguely communicative approach. The experimental group was instructed by an adapted version of suggestopedia. Instructional effects were measured by pre- and post-tests, including role plays with a native speaker and a written multiple choice test.

The main finding of Wildner-Bassett's study is good news: learners in both groups improved their knowledge and use of gambits significantly during the period of instruction; however, learners in the control group did better than their colleagues in the experimental group. (Whether they improved **because** of the instruction is, of course, an inference, but in the extant EFL context, it seems highly plausible.) Quality and quantity of gambit use increased in both groups. In the control group but not in the experimental group, learners' use of fillers and hesitators decreased. Since the 'communicative' control group did better than the 'suggestopedic' experimental group, this finding lends further empirical support to the role played by pragmatic formulae in fluency.

Some major findings from a qualitative analysis of the learners' use of gambits in the role plays were the following (pp. 304ff.).

1. The pragmalinguistic functions of frequent routines such as *you see*, *I guess* or *excuse me* were overgeneralized by some learners, e.g.

   (3) NS: Your name's not on the list but perhaps I can fix you up with a room despite that
   NNS: no *scuse me* I have ordered exactly a room with a bath and I insist on (p. 306)

2. Interlocutor input may prime learners' use of specific formulae. Thus one learner did not use the gambit *you see* at all until the NS provided it, upon which the learner started using *you see* in contextually appropriate and inappropriate functions.

3. While the overall quality of the learners' use of pragmatic routines had improved, some problems remained, such as

   - transfer errors resulting from literal translations of L1 formulae, as in *believe it to me* (*glauben Sie mir*[dativ]) instead of *believe me*, or *on the other side* (*auf der anderen Seite*) instead of *on the other hand*;
   - blends of two formulae, as in *on the other rate*, a blend of *on the other hand* and *at any rate*, or *I would be very appreciated* from *I would be very happy* and *I would appreciate it* (cf. Bodman & Eisenstein's (1988) *"I very appreciate it"*);
   - illegal modification, such as in 'that's a very pity';
   - lack of functional differentiation, as in this exchange:

     (4) NS: the next flight to Frankfurt leaves tomorrow morning at eight thirty
     NNS: oh I *I really cannot agree* I have a very important negotiation tomorrow (p. 345).

   - the "clanger phenomena" (Arndt & Janney, 1980), i.e., aggressive utterances or utterance elements which deviate stylistically from the politeness level of the ongoing interaction.

Wildner-Bassett's study demonstrates that pragmatic routines can indeed be taught quite successfully. One of the questions her findings raise is whether the remaining problems are somehow related to the foreign language learning context. Perhaps in a second language environment which affords more target language input and opportunities for interaction with native and other nonnative speakers, learners will achieve a more native-like command of pragmatic routines.

Rehbein's study (1987b) on the use of "multiple formulae" by Turkish learners of German as a second language did not support the assumption that a second language context

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per se provides better learning opportunities. The Turkish learners were migrant workers who had lived in the Federal Republic of Germany for more than eight years. They had not received any formal instruction in German. A striking feature of the routines observed in these learners' speech production is their linguistically simplified structure and functionally extended scope. Some of the categories noted by Rehbein (1987b) are

- IL-specific formulae to convey illocutionary force, e.g., *ich bin* 'I am' for marking speaker involvement in assertions relating to past or planned actions, as *in ich bin de Urlaub fah-ren ... Tuerkei 'I am then vacation go ... Turkey.*
- marking subjective evaluations to qualify assertions by means of the qualifier *normalerweise* 'usually'. The learners use this qualifier both in its target-like meaning 'usually' and in order to express a discrepancy between two states of affairs. The target form associated with this second meaning is the modal particle *eigentlich* 'properly speaking'.
- quoting, i.e., indexing a stretch of discourse as someone else's speech by the formula *sagta* 'he/she said', as in *sagta: "du komm morgen!"* 'he said "you come tomorrow."'
- multiple discourse markers such as *moment ma'* 'just a minute' and *alles klar* 'everything's alright'. The target form *moment mal* serves to announce new aspects of a topic, indexing that an idea has suddenly occurred to the speaker and focussing the hearer's attention on the following speech segment. The learners use the phonologically reduced form *moment ma'* as a turnkeeping device, helping to bridge pauses in utterance planning. Cf. *Klasse sw/... Klasse ... Klasse ... moment ma Klasse drei und ... eins und aeh swei ...ne?* 'class tw/... class... class ...wait a minute class three and ... one and uh two...right?'

Perhaps even more striking is the use of *alles klar* as a narrative device, as in this story telling sequence:

(5) L: undann Wohnungsam, ja, alles klar. Papiere alles klar. Pass, alles klar. Frau... undann, ja alles klar, ja, undann schreibn, ...komm, keine Wohnung, ama gans rigtig, Kollega, undann alles klar, Wohnung, ... weiss nicht ... immer kucken da, kucken, nix essen da ...komm da heute dr/halb swei Uhr ... komm, ...nix essen, imma Wohnung gucken. (And then housing office, okay, everything's alright, papers, everything's alright, passport, everything's alright, wife... and then, ok, everythings, alright, yes, and then write, ... come, no appartment, ... but quite true, mate, and then, everything's alright, apartment, ... don't know... always look around there, look, no eat there, ...come there today thr/half past one ...come, ...eat nothing, always look for apartment.' (p. 23)

In this story, *alles klar* functions as a generic substitute for specific rhematic units, complementing the specified theme. Its main narrative function is to indicate successfully completed past action, the specific nature of which is left to the hearer to elaborate.

The use of pragmatic routines in the Turkish learners' speech production suggests a number of things about the acquisition of pragmatic and linguistic competence by these immigrant workers. The observed formulae are frequent and salient in NS input. They are incorporated into the learners' interlanguage under partial reduction of their formal (syntactic and phonological) properties and expansion of their pragmatic and discourse functions. Some of these formulae, such as *ich bin...*, serve as sentence builders in the sense of Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), while other, such as *alles klar*, function to complete narrative units. In agreement with earlier studies on untutored L2 acquisition by immigrant workers (e.g., Meisel, 1977; Schumann, 1978), Rehbein surmises that in the institutional context of an industrial work place, migrants develop a repertoire of routinized fixed expressions for multiple purpose usage. Unlike L2 learners who acquire L2 in more favorable social settings, such as Hakuta's (1974) and Wong-Fillmore's (1976) subjects, it does not seem likely for these migrants to decompose their routinized utterance fragments into rule-based linguistic knowledge, nor to acquire target-like functions of these and other pragmatic formulae. More of the same communicative experience will not be very helpful for these learners to destabilize their fossilized interlanguage. Rehbein is optimistic, however, about possible benefits of L2 teaching, and indeed this optimism is supported by another study on the same population of immigrant workers (Barkowski, Harnisch, & Kumm, 1978).

CONCLUSION

The most striking contrast in Wildner-Bassett's (1984) and Rehbein's (1987b) findings is the highly successful - though not perfect - learning of a large variety of pragmatic formulae by the instructed middle-class foreign language learners and the very limited, non-targetlike multiple formulae which were the communicative resource in the pidginized IL-variety developed by the uninstructed migrant workers. One implication from these studies is that closer attention needs to be paid to the social context of L2 learning, and to the learning opportunities afforded by different environments of L2 acquisition. Extending the discussion again to indirectness in linguistic action, it would seem important to determine whether the context-sensitivity shown for the acquisition of pragmatic routine is also a central aspect in learners' use and understanding of indirection, and its development over time. For example, the foreign students examined by Bouton (1992) achieved remarkable skill in interpreting implicature through exposure only. Will learners in different social environments learn how to interpret implicatures just as successfully? Will learners in a socially comparable **foreign** language context become as good at inferencing pragmatic intent as their uninstructed counterparts? Takahashi and Beebe (1987) and Kitao (1990) suggest an advantage for Japanese ESL learners over EFL in speech act production and politeness assessment. It will be a task for future studies to determine the impact of a pure foreign language context on the acquisition of implicature in L2. Finally, in a second language environment, can natural acquisition of indirection be supported by instruction? Results of a recent study by Bouton (1994) are encouraging. It remains to be examined what instructional options are best suited to help students in different social environments and learning contexts improve their knowledge and skill in using routine and indirection efficiently in L2.

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